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SERMON LXII.

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THE SON OF GOD MUST BE REVERENCED.

MATT. xxi. 37.—*They will reverence my son.*

OUR Lord, in the context, represents the ingratitude and the barrenness of the Jewish church, by a parable of a vineyard leased for several successive years to unworthy husbandmen, who would not yield the owner any of its fruits ; but treated unmercifully every servant sent to receive them. They "took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. But, last of all, he sent unto them his son ; saying, *They will reverence my son.* But they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him."

We read, that the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and Judah, his pleasant plant. He had given them his written word, and had sent among them his prophets. He had displayed before them his glory, and had, as it were, surrounded them by a munition of rocks. The early and the latter rains had rendered their lands fertile, and the blessing of God had prospered them, in all that they set their hands to do. Thus Israel was emphatically a vineyard. But when God had a right to expect that the vines he had planted and nourished would bring forth grapes, they brought forth wild grapes. The very people he had chosen, killed his prophets, polluted his worship, and hewed down his altars ; and finally imbrued their hands in the blood of his Son.

Hence the parable, delivered by him who spoke as never man spake, must have had amazing point and force. It aroused their anger, and they would at once have laid hands on him, if they had not feared the multitude. God had a right to expect, that they would welcome to their sanctuary the promised Redeemer, and would hail his birth as the pledge

of their redemption. But in their cruelties to the Son of God, they acted out the native temper of the human heart, and showed themselves to be just such men as lived before and have lived since the period of the Saviour's advent. What is said of Israel may be said of men in all ages :—

It might have been presumed that they would treat kindly the Son of God.

This doctrine may be established by the following considerations :—

1. That men would treat Him kindly, might have been justly presumed, *from the divinity and glory of his highest nature.* He had a divine as well as human nature : he was " God manifest in the flesh." Previous to his coming, it had been as distinctly asserted, that he was divine, as that he would be human. That prediction of him, " To us a child is born, unto us a son is given : and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace," had been read by the posterity of Abraham ; and foretold Him in his divine and in his human character. They had reason to expect a Saviour, who built the worlds, and who governs the worlds he built. Hence the thought of treating him with contempt was impious—like offering direct insult to Jehovah. And he had no sooner appeared, than both his natures became manifest. As man he hungered, while as God he created bread to feed the multitude : as man he thirsted, but as God he converted the water into wine ; as man he could suffer, and bleed, and die, while as God he could make the sufferer whole ; and even summon the dead from their graves. Thus the accusers, the judges, and the executioners of the Lord Jesus, could have no want of evidence that he was the mighty God. Hence, it might have been presumed, that if he must die, God himself must slay him. He must come to his sepulchre by the immediate hand of Omnipotence. No one would dare to betray him, no soldiery would have hardihood enough to arrest him, no miscreant would sit to judge him, no multitude would insult him, none would dare to crucify him. And we should seem to reason correctly in all this, carrying ourselves back to the period before his coming. And still we should reason contrary to matters of fact.

We should have said, anterior to his offering himself to men as their Mediator and their friend, that they would all accept his proffered friendship. When God himself offers to save, how can man reject him ? He who now stretches out his hands to the wretched and the lost of this assembly, is the same infinite Redeemer who called Lazarus from the grave, who fed the multitude, who stilled the waves, who burst the bands of death, and proved his divinity by ascending triumphant on high. Angels, and other beings who might know what an offer men would thus have of salvation by Jehovah himself, could not have believed that sinners would treat him as they do ;—that from Sabbath to Sabbath they would hear his overtures, and turn their back upon him. They would not have conceived it possible, that men, after all he has done, would question his divinity, and rob him of his glory, and persecute his people.

If God should render himself visible, and stand from Sabbath to Sabbath with pardons in his hand, pressing men to accept forgiveness and live, the obstinacy of sinners would appear just what it is. For, one who is divine, does thus stand. He appropriates to himself all the glories of the Godhead, has the titles, does the works, possesses the attributes, receives the worship, and claims the honors of the Father. He is adored in heaven, under the appellation of the Lamb, in every anthem. And still he stands knocking unheeded at the door of the sinner's heart, till his head is wet with the dew, and his locks with the drops of the night; till we hardly know which is the most surprising, his condescension or the sinner's obstinacy. "They will reverence my Son."

2. It might have been presumed that the Lord Jesus would be kindly treated by men, *from the perfect excellence of his character as a man*. There was nothing in him to provoke the anger of good beings. There was neither pride, nor jealousy, nor selfishness, nor passion, nor any of those evil affections that so often involve men in disgraceful broils. He was meek and lowly of mind. He had a character of perfect loveliness. His lips were charged with blessings, and not with curses: "there was no guile found in his mouth." He loved the souls of men, more than he loved his life. There was nothing in him for men to blame or quarrel with, but every thing that could be desired to draw forth their strongest emotions of gratitude and love.

Who could conceive of a race of beings so vile, that they would quarrel with an angel? yet angels have no such worth, as was found in the Son of God. The prophets had human nature left, and might provoke the rage of their enemies, and tantalize their persecutors. They might demand the fruit of the vineyard in a manner, not the most condescending and kind, and might contribute, by their own unworthy conduct, to fan the fires that were kindling to consume them. And the apostles were men of like passions with those who mocked them, and stoned them. While they demanded boldly, and promptly, the fruit of the vineyard, they might, perhaps, sometimes make the demand rudely. But, "they will reverence my Son." Nothing that was wrong in prophets and apostles was found in him; and what was wanting in them, was in him. He made every doctrine plain, and every duty clear and obvious. He never pressed the conscience till he had enlightened the understanding, nor used an argument that was not sound and good. His honesty, and integrity, and wisdom, entitled him to the credit and the kindness of all men.

Now, are ungodly men aware, that it is this same kind and good Redeemer, who now offers to conduct them to the abodes of glory, but whose kindness they spurn, and whose love they despise? Could it have been believed by those who knew him and adored him, that men would thus treat him, as do all the impenitent? "They will reverence my Son."

3. It might have been presumed, that men would treat kindly the Lord Jesus, *from the reasonableness of his claims*. He came not to reap where he had not sown, or gather where he had not strewed. He came not to

demand allegiance, when another had a better right to the sceptre than himself; he came not to a world that had another for its creator, its benefactor, and redeemer. He is emphatically represented as having come "*to his own*, but his own received him not." This world belongs to the Lord Jesus from its foundation to its top-stone. To him pertain the wisdom of having planned it, the glory of having built it, the right to govern it, and the authority to judge it. All creatures, in him live, and move, and have their being. Hence he has a right to our services, independently of his redeeming right. The breath he gives he may require to utter itself in praise; the arm he nerves he may tax with duty; and the eye he enlightens he may reasonably expect to regard him with perpetual complacency.

And when we take into account the ransom price he paid, his own blood, by which he purchased anew the world that was his before, his claim to us and ours is too manifest to be disputed. "He gave himself a ransom for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." In demanding our hearts, then, he demands what is his by a double right; the right of creation and of purchase. We owe to him all we have, and all we are, and all we hope for. We can adore no other sovereign without treason against him, and serve no other master without robbery. All the angels of God are directed to worship him; and if angels, who are his by feeble ties, must pay him supreme respect, then his right to us, and his property in us, none but devils, surely, can have the audacity to question. Hence, from the justness of his claims, it might have been presumed that men would treat well the Lord Jesus Christ. The vineyard and all its fruits are his.

4. It might have been presumed, that men would treat well the Lord Jesus Christ, *from the condescending kindness of his intentions*. He stood in no need of us. He would have had an empire large enough to be the organ of his praise, if we had perished. "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels." And if men had been passed by, and not redeemed, he would, no doubt, have drawn out to view, in some other way, his mercy and his wisdom, which now display themselves in the economy of redemption. He might have redeemed, for aught we know, the lost angels; or might have displayed redemption among the population of some other forlorn and ruined world, or might have revealed his gracious character to us, as he has his eternity, through the word of inspiration. Christ was not dependent on us, either for the stability of his throne, or the promulgation of his glory, or the felicity of his being. No motive brought him to our world but pure benevolence. He "so loved the world," that he gave himself as its ransom. Its miseries moved his pity, and he stooped to help us. He would not have come, had he not been kind and gracious. True, he showed a special regard to the law; would have it honored; would not allow one jot or tittle of it to fail; and hence may be viewed as having come to "establish the law;" but it must be remembered, that the law might have been honored in its execution

upon the guilty : so that, independently of the idea of saving sinners, there was no need of the death of Christ, in order to honor the law. Hence his errand into our world was emphatically an errand of love. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The love of Christ was the basis of the covenant of redemption. It led him to lay aside his glory, and cover himself with a veil of flesh, and become "acquainted with grief." "Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be rich." He who built all worlds, condescended to say of himself, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Thus, "by grace are we saved."

Now, it might have been presumed, that the Lord Jesus Christ, on an errand so benevolent, would have been treated well. His design was too kind to deserve any other than the kindest and most prompt reception. Had he gone to devils instead of men, it would seem impossible but they must have received him kindly, when on such an errand, with such heavenly designs. The very pit, it would seem, must have echoed with his praise. Hence, if men have a better character, as they boast they have, ask them how they receive the message of divine mercy. Does the Lord Jesus possess the throne of your heart? Is he the sovereign object of your fear, your love, your hope, and your worship? If not, then cast from you that exalted opinion of yourself, which raises you a single degree above the tenants of the pit.

5. It might have been presumed, that men would treat well the Lord Jesus Christ, *from his known ability to save*. Had he come in such weakness as would have rendered the enterprise doubtful on which he had entered, then there might have been a temptation to despise him. Had he failed in making the atonement, or been unable to change the heart, or proved inadequate to the work of leading on his people, to victory and glory, after he had enlisted them, then had he brought all the measures of his mercy into contempt, and angels would have refused to do him homage. But he was able to do all. He had but to lay down a life which none could take from him, and the price of our redemption was paid. He had but to speak the word, and the ~~veriest~~ *veriest* rebel bowed to his mandate. And he has always, with consummate skill, led on the sacramental hosts of his elect to the abodes of paradise. Hence, he is said to have "trodden the winepress alone;" he is represented as "travelling in the greatness of his strength;" is said to "gird his sword upon his thigh," and to "ride forth conquering and to conquer."

Now, we needed just such a Redeemer; one who was "mighty to save." We were in a condition too forlorn to be redeemed by any other than an Almighty Saviour. Hence, when such a Saviour was offered, how could men do otherwise than kindly receive and joyfully embrace him? How could he fail to gain their confidence and love, and be the chosen Captain of their salvation, their Lord, and their King? "They will reverence my Son."

6. This might have been presumed, from his ability to *destroy*, as well as to *save*. The Saviour comes, it is true, with an offer of mercy; but he comes, too, clothed with all the authority of the Godhead. He will one day say, as in the parable, "These mine enemies, who would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither, and slay them before me." The offers he makes to sinners they cannot with impunity reject. A blessing offered us by our fellow-men may be received or not, as we please, and, if rejected, there accrues no guilt: not so the offer of mercy by Jesus Christ. He comes to demand our hearts as his throne; and will bless us if we receive him; but we are cursed if we reject him.

And the sinner, it would seem, must *know* that he is strong to destroy. He hurled the rebel angels from heaven, and fastened them in chains under darkness till the judgment of the great day. He drowned a world, when it would not have him to reign over it. And all his foes he has sent to a hopeless perdition, as fast as they have evinced themselves incorrigibly wicked. Kind as are now his overtures, and extensive his promises, and prolonged his endurance, still, if you remain impenitent, he must stain his raiment with your blood. His eyes will be as flames of fire; and out of his mouth will go a sharp sword, to smite the ungodly; and on his vesture and on his thigh will be seen written, "King of kings and Lord of lords." How tremendous the thought, that the very Lord Jesus, at whose feet so many sinners have found pardon, will rise upon the finally incorrigible in all the greatness of his strength, and "tread them in his anger, and trample them in his fury!" To such a Prince, how fair the presumption, that every knee would bow and every tongue confess.

Finally, it might have been presumed that sinners would treat kindly the Lord Jesus *from their necessities*. He found them "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." He passed by, and saw them as an infant "cast out into the open field," in the day that it was born. We had fallen under the curse of the broken law—had neither righteousness, nor holiness, nor happiness, nor hope. There was nothing for us but misery now, and "a fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, that must devour the adversary." Thus, our necessities put us in need of a friend—an almighty friend—one that could pity and help the most miserable. Could it then have been presumed, that, should such a friend offer his aid, beings so lost and miserable would reject him?

One would sooner conceive that a beggar would spurn the plenty and the pleasures of a palace, and choose to lodge in the street; or that the blind would choose to grope their way to the grave, when they might have vision; or that a dying man would refuse the touch that might give him life and health.

I close with three remarks:—

1. The sinner's final ruin is *unnecessary*. All the purposes of his personal perdition may now be answered in the Saviour. The law can be honored, and God honored, and he escape damnation. All the purity of the precepts, and all the attributes of the Godhead, are displayed in the

Lord Jesus Christ, far more amply than in the volume of "smoke that ascendeth up for ever and ever." O yes; the cross, that everlasting monument of a dying Saviour, reveals the Deity far more intelligibly than the "everlasting fire." Hence, the sinner is lost, not because of any necessity for his ruin; not because of any doom that chained him down to death; not because his salvation was impossible; not because Heaven could devise no other expedient for securing the divine veracity; not because of any thing we can think of—but that he "chose darkness rather than light"—and "death rather than life." Hence,

2. His ruin will be *self-induced*. By this, I do not mean merely that he is a voluntary agent in breaking the divine law. This, sin always implies. I intend more than this. The sinner puts forth his hand, and thrusts from him the charter of forgiveness. He might have had life after he was condemned; after his death-warrant was written and sealed; after the pit had been prepared to receive him. Nay, when hell itself was begun in his bosom, and the divine anger was consuming him—even then eternal life was possible,—but he "chose death!" Hence,

Finally, his ruin will be *wanton*. He will be viewed for ever as having sported with his soul; as if it had been a pearl, and he had run with it to the mouth of the pit, and cast it in; or as if it had been a combustible world, and he with a torch had set it on fire. He employed himself in scattering firebrands, arrows, and death, and still professed himself to be in sport. The man who plunges the knife in his own heart, does not more wantonly die, than the impenitent hearer of the Gospel plunges himself in perdition. O, how affecting, that hell should be thus peopled by a world of suicides, who dared the vengeance, and tantalized the compassion, and despised the forbearance of the Eternal! It might reasonably have been presumed, *They will reverence my Son*. But no! insulted Jehovah! they pour indignity upon his name and his cross, despise his messengers, and "perish in their sins," rather than do him homage, and humbly seek redemption through his blood.

SERMON LXIII.

By DANIEL A. CLARK, A. M.

THE TWO CHAMPIONS CONTRASTED.

ISAIAH, xl. 30, 31.—*Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint.*

THE sentiment is often entertained, that religion is suitable only for the weak, the aged, and the infirm; but is quite *useless*, if not *injurious*, to the young, healthful, and prosperous. When we have yielded all the respect we can to men who advance this sentiment, we must still pity their delusion. It can never be said that piety injures the young man. He may cultivate in connexion with it all the amiable properties of human nature. May be mild and affable; may be decent and ardent; modest and courageous. These lovely and noble qualities religion does not eradicate, but cherish. Can it cast a shade of deformity over them, to add the love and fear of God, who is supremely amiable? Are men so hostile to their Maker, that respect for him and obedience to him, must make a wound incurable in one's reputation? Then must it be acknowledged, that this is indeed a fallen world.

Is it feared that religion in the young man will cramp his genius, and stop the march of intellect? It would be strange indeed, if a taste for the noblest of all sciences, the knowledge of God and his truth, should narrow the mind, and limit the flight of genius. Such a result would contradict all experience, and give the lie to the first principles of mental science.

Is it feared that piety will wither and paralyze the native fearlessness of youth, and render tame and cowardly the man whose courage and daring might have astonished the world? Does then the love of God, the very principle that makes alliance with the hosts of heaven, and with God himself, diminish our courage, and make us fly when none pursueth? We should expect it far otherwise, and should look for a bravery that no danger could daunt, when there is for our defence a host of angels, and One "higher than the highest." The psalmist reasoned thus, and said, "The Lord is my strength, of whom shall I be afraid?" And Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

What is it, then, that in the esteem of the ungodly renders religion so uncomely in the young man? Where does it fix deformity? True, it does render him less covetous of this world's goods, and less ambitious of its honors, less daring in its deeds of darkness, less deceitful, and less intriguing. But is he the less a man, and deserving of less esteem? In such a

suggestion there is an infidelity too barefaced to be hidden. The amount of it is, that piety implies the fear of God; and this is, to the ungodly, the most offensive of all attributes.

The text will lead us to look at the two characters—the youth who sets out to press his way through life and death by the dint of native courage, and the one who waits on the Lord, and thus gathers strength from heaven to bear him on to victory and glory.

I would here premise, that this is a stormy life. Upon every man, more or less, the tempests will beat. Be his character godly or ungodly, he will have foes, and meet dangers, and suffer hardships, and feel afflictions, and will say, before he gets through, that he is passing a desert world. Now we must encounter the calamities of life by native prowess, or by the courage of piety: Which will aid us the best? This is the question which I wish may be pondered with solemnity for a few moments.

I shall mention some of the storms of life, that we shall all be sure to meet; and inquire, as I pass on, which has the safest defence—the mere man of the world, or the man of piety.

1. We shall all probably part with beloved friends. The ties that bind them to us are slender, the sport of every wind that blows, and every dew that falls. They are ours only by loan, and must be resigned. We may have warnings of their departure, or may have none. They may be torn from us at the moment of our highest attachment—when our life is bound up in theirs—when it shall seem to us that *we have nothing to stay for, if they must leave us*. This calamity will certainly come, alike upon the good man and the unbeliever. Which will sustain it best? They stand together by the death-bed of a mother, a father, a sister, a brother; they have the same instinctive passions; they both feel the stroke, and must try to outlive it. But by what principles shall they brace their minds against the storm?

The unbeliever may hope to forget his sorrow, or find some other friend as good, or draw from something else, the comfort he has enjoyed in his dying friend. But all this is a distant and uncertain relief. He will find it difficult to forget his friend, and he dare not wish to, and months, or even years, must elapse before he can hope to. Nor will he find it easy to supply the place of his friend. Such friends do not rain down from heaven, do not spring up from the ground, cannot be bought. A mother, for instance,—who can supply her place? Who, like her, will wear out her nature to serve you, and watch by your sick-bed, and feel every pang, and wipe away your tears? What friend will become dear to you as your brother, and suffer to befriend you, and endure any thing but death to save you? I know “there is a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother;” but he is the friend of the godly; not yours. And you will find it difficult, if you have lost a friend, to secure the same amount of enjoyment elsewhere. Friends are our choicest blessings. Wealth is trash, and fame is air; but a *friend*, in this cold-hearted world, is a precious pearl. See then how distant and doubtful is the consolation of the ungodly.

Take some of the still nearer and dearer friends, and the case is more hopeless still. The mother must see her child taken in the cold embrace of death. And she tries, does she? to live through it without divine support. Now where and when will she find one, who will call her mother, and feel her pains, and watch her tears, and sooth her miseries? Oh, I hear her say, unless she has still another son, "My gray hairs will come down with sorrow to the grave. I shall go weeping to the sepulchre for my son."

Or the dying friend is a wife. Go now, and find, if you can, one who will be a mother to your children. Try if you can forget her endearments. Try if you can find in any other object the amount of joy you had in her. Oh, how the agonies of the ungodly wring pity from our hearts. This is the onset when "the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall." No native vigor can enable one to brow-beat a storm like this, and not be in the result a hopeless and desponding sufferer. The heart loses its courage, soon as it enters the conflict. No cold philosophy can reason down affection, or mitigate the agonies of separation. And the poor survivor, whether a father or mother, a wife, a sister, or brother, if an unbeliever, can only "lie down in sorrow."

But not so the Christian, who waits upon the Lord. He has in heaven a better Friend than he has lost, and can smile at the ravages of death, as hurting only some of his minor interests. He can immediately transfer the affection he fixed upon his friend, to God; and reap, in an hour, a return infinitely better than any fruits of earthly friendship. He holds all his living friends as the loan of Heaven, ready to be transferred to their original Proprietor. And in the hour of trial his soul utters with deep sincerity, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." He has not to wait till he can forget his friend, or find another, or procure a substitute. He "waits upon the Lord," and is thus strengthened for the hour, and becomes happy in the midst of tears. He passes through the waters, but God is with him; and through the floods, but they do not overflow him. He walks through the fire, but is not burned, neither does the flame kindle upon him. His song is, "The Lord liveth; and blessed be my Rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted." He never calculated on any very durable good from earthly things, as does the unrenewed man. Hence, he is not disappointed. His best hopes are not cut off, nor his richest prospects darkened. God has been as good to him as his promises, and better than his own fears. His trials will soon end in heaven. There he will join a circle of friends to whom he has been long more attached than to any other. Thus he mounts as on eagles' wings, scales the very heavens, runs and is not weary, walks and is not faint.

At how many funerals have we witnessed this wide contrast between the native prowess of a mind unsanctified, and the fortitude of a man of God strengthened for the trial by the light of *his* countenance.

Come, then, my young friends, let me assure you, how only you can be happy in the hour of bereavement. You may suppress your tears when

you attend the funeral of your mother, or your brother, but nature will feel. You may put on the stoic, but the heart will bleed. You may try to cheer your spirits, but your strength will fail, unless God in that hour is your refuge, your very present help. If you intend to live without him, you need hope for nothing but that his waves and his billows will often come over you, while there will be no comforter. You have twenty dear friends, and one may die each year, these twenty years; and ere then you may die yourself. Thus the heart will bleed, and you will be covered with the weeds of death, all the way to the sepulchre. I should not choose to be one of your friends, unless I could believe that you would think of me when I was gone one year; that my funeral solemnities would create a cloud, that would cast its shade upon you till the sun had performed at least one annual revolution. Let each friend make the same demand, and you have no divine support under your bereavements, and you readily see that the whole of life is a cloudy and dark day.

I have noticed yet the loss of friends *by death* only; but we may lose them more tremendously, *by desertion*. Let the hour come when it shall not be popular to be your friend, and when many who have sought your acquaintance, and received your hospitality, and waited to know and do your pleasure, shall hide their face from you; then is the hour when "the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint." I know there is a buoyancy in the human heart, that may seem for a moment to sustain you. You can despise the man whose sycophancy deceived you, but who was never your friend, and has now only uncovered to you the rottenness of his heart. You can resolve to despise the men who are the friends of your prosperity, but not of your adversity; and they deserve to be despised: but you will feel a pain dart through you in that hour, which you must sustain, either by your native prowess or by a higher courage. Would you trust in an arm of flesh? Ah, but this arm fails you; and then where will you lean? Now, the good man has no misgivings in such an hour. With him it is a living maxim, "It is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment; but he that judgeth me is the Lord." Paul could keep up all his courage while in the midst of a people who not long before would have plucked out their eyes and given them to him, but were now become his enemies because he told them the truth. And the Lord Jesus Christ, who had all the tenderness of our nature, could, without despair, hear the cry, Crucify him! crucify him! uttered by that same multitude whose blind he had made to see, whose lame to walk, whose lepers he had cleansed, whose sick he had healed, and whose dead he had raised. All this one can easily sustain who has an almighty Friend in heaven. He can pour a holy contempt upon the wavering men who have no principle, and will desert him when he needs their friendship most. He can stand erect, because *God* is with him. But how can *you* stand, who have no such friend, but whose whole kindred are in this deceitful words?

Here is the spot where it will again happen that "the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint."

2. Amid the changes of this ill-fated world we shall all be liable to suffer the loss of property. No treasure but that which is laid up in heaven is secure; our houses may burn down over our heads; our streams may fail; a foe may rob us of our rights; we may be called to spend all we have upon physicians; we may lose our spirit of enterprise; our reason may desert us. All the good things of this life are ready to take wings and fly away.

Now, can the man who has no treasure in heaven sustain his spirit, as can the man of faith and of prayer? By what consideration can he comfort his soul, when ye shall have taken away his goods? When he is robbed of his best treasures, of *all he has* in the life that now is, while he has nothing in the life to come, how can he fail to sink? Says the sacred penman, "Their rock is not as our Rock, our enemies themselves being judges." He who has no interest in that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, how can he part with his temporal habitation? He who has no treasure which moth and rust cannot corrupt, how can he part with his corruptible riches? He who has no greatness or glory in the kingdom of God, how can he dispense with that which renders him great in the present world? Made once poor for time, how can he hope for any thing else but eternal bankruptcy? If he should hope to *rise again*, still this is a "hope deferred which maketh the heart sick." If he try to be great in his poverty, still, in a world like this, he will find it difficult, not to say impossible. If he would try to be happy, while yet he is small, here pride erects an insurmountable barrier. He lacks all the means of being happy. The good he values, his only good, is gone. The heaven he built for himself had no foundation, and the storms have swept it away. Poor soul, how completely is he made a bankrupt, and a beggar, and how impossible that he should retrieve his circumstances, till he is altered essentially in his disposition and character!

But things are not thus desperate with the good man, when he finds his estate diminished. We read of those who "took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance." The friends of God have laid up for themselves "treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." They have provided themselves with "garments that wax not old," and have "a house not built with hands eternal in the heavens." In the midst of losses, they often see that the riches they have parted with stood between them and God, and made them less happy and less holy than they may be without them. They held the heart divided, and kept it cold, and worldly, and selfish, and sordid. Now the clog is removed, and they can mount up as on the wings of eagles. They have now *nothing but heaven* to care for; what they have lost they could have used but a little while, and they can mount higher without it. They still have all that God ever promised;

their bread and their water is made sure. If they can never be rich *here*, still they can hope for durable riches and righteousness in the life to come. If they must toil hard, still their rest will at last be long and sweet. If they must be small and unnoticed, still there awaits them "a crown of glory" in the life to come. Thus, how evident that no native prowess can enable one to conflict with the storms of life like the grace of God.

3. But let us try the prowess of the two champions in another conflict. While one storm shall beat upon friendship, and another upon property, another still may make its assault upon character. This you know is valuable as life. "A good name is better than precious ointment." Being depraved, we are vulnerable at every point. "There is no man that liveth and doeth good and sinneth not." We break the laws of God and of man. We violate the dictates of conscience, and the rules of righteousness. And that man knows nothing of himself, that does not acknowledge all this. Hence we become justly exposed. Men can injure us, and say the truth.

But what is more yet, the utmost uprightness of character does not secure from the attack of slander. If men cannot find enough that is true, they can unblushingly fabricate the rest. And no man, godly or ungodly, is wholly secure. The godly are forewarned, that as men have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, so much rather will they calumniate the household. And now, which, think you, will be the best support through this storm, native prowess, or supernatural grace?

You have known the ungodly man to be slandered. Men have accused him of deeds he never did, have wronged him, and abused him. And he set himself to oppose the tempest. He cursed his accusers, and returned every blow they dealt, and raved at the foe, and sinned more grossly than he ever had before. He plotted revenge, and pursued it, and perhaps obtained it. But after all was done, was he not rather the vanquished than the conqueror. Did he stand on more elevated ground when he *quit*, than when he *began* the conflict? Ah, he overcame evil with evil, and sunk the deeper by his attempts to rise.

Let us view the most favorable case. The man abused is ungodly, but has the properties that constitute an amiable man. He meets the assault with all the calmness and all the patience he can command. He reasons, 'If they destroy my reputation, they take my interest too, and then what have I left.' Having no sense of sin, he is not humble, and will not be very patient. He will not exercise a spirit of forgiveness, nor a spirit of meekness, nor see the wisdom of God in the appointment, nor hope for an augmentation of his enjoyments as the final result. Hence he must be unhappy and must be a loser. His courage may in a sense sustain him, but while he stands he will still be wounded, and perhaps destroyed.

Now the man of God in such a conflict has a *heavenly* armour. In the very onset he takes the shield of faith. He is *patient*, because he sees it to be the hand of God. He is *calm* from the conviction, that, dark as the storm may lower, he is safe. If his character should be injured, it only assimilates his condition to that of his divine Lord. He has that sense of sin that renders him *humble*. He exercises a spirit of meekness and of

forgiveness, and this renders him *happy*. In the event, as a divine appointment, he sees the wisdom of God, and hopes and believes that in the issue God will be glorified, and his own best good promoted. "To me," he can say with the apostle, "it is a very light thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment." Can he only hope to stand approved in the last great day, all decisions of fallible men to the contrary, have not, with him, the weight of a feather.

Would an angel care, if the whole population of this world should assemble in a mass, and pronounce him a sinner or a fool! He would know that he might still hold the same standing in the sight of God. So the man of faith can soar and act the angel in the hour of onset. He does not, and dares not depend on any native strength of his own, but "waits upon the Lord, and renews his strength."

4. We are all liable to disease and death. God has not exempted his people, and certainly not his enemies, from this calamity. Disease and death are the wages of sin. And here it often happens literally, that "even the youths are faint and weary." We have seen nature struggling with disease even in the very morning of life. The young man, strong and vigorous to-day, panting for breath to-morrow, and in a few days sinking into an untimely sepulchre.

Now the man who hopes to meet all this by native courage, it would seem must be destitute of the power of reasoning. The very nature of the calamity augurs that he will have neither strength nor courage to bear it. It is the very first effect of disease to render faint and weary—to dishearten and unnerve. The veriest Goliath is a child, when he wrestles with the plague or the pestilence. How then can he stand in the contest?

The mind is enfeebled with the body: hence he cannot reason down his alarms and his apprehensions; cannot sustain his own sinking spirits. He who a few days since would not have feared to meet single-handed the hardest foe that might take the field, cannot now raise his head, and is in fear, where no danger is. He may have some consolation from the hope of recovery. But this one hope, tremulous and often forlorn, is the only stay of his soul that remains. If he must die, he is lost for ever.

But here the man of God does not thus sink and perish. He is conscious that he deserves the chastisement; hence has no quarrel with the Power that afflicts. He submits and is calm. He has the promise that God will sustain him, will be with him in six troubles, and in seven will not forsake him. "When flesh and heart fail him, God will be the strength of his heart and his portion for ever,—all things shall work together for good to them that love God;" and these promises were all made with design to be fulfilled. Hence the good man, when he suffers, can leave himself with God. Every care and every interest he rolls over upon his generous and almighty Supporter. To him "to live is Christ, and to die is gain." He can cheerfully wait his "appointed time," and can hope that there is laid up for him "a crown of life that fadeth not."

But what is over and above all this, he enjoys the smiles of God. These lighten his pains and give him joy and peace. Hence sung the weeping poet;

"The chamber, where the good man meets his fate,
Is privileged beyond the common walk
Of virtuous life, quite on the verge of heaven."

On the very dying bed have we heard the triumphant song, "I mount, I fly." Infidelity may declare all this visionary; but it is none the less a reality. It is what God has promised, what his people expect, what the diseased and the dying have told us they enjoyed, and is no more incredible than the new birth, at which the ruler of the Jews marvelled.

Now take from the mass of the ungodly, the sturdiest youth you can name, and let him go to his chamber and grapple with disease and death; and place in the adjoining chamber the man of prayer, in precisely the same distressing attitude; and tell me which shall have the palm. The one shall use all his native mind and muscle, shall brace himself against the paroxysms of disease, and cheer up his spirits, and resist the fear of death, and to the full extent of his power, stay his false hope, and wake up his courage. His brave associates shall come round him, and ply their sophistry to put down his pains, and put out the eye of conscience, and hide hell from him, and God from him, and his own history from him. And no Bible shall be near him, nor pastor near him, nor prayers be offered. He shall have through the whole conflict all the help that earth and hell can give him. The other shall but make use of prayer and faith, shall stay himself upon his Redeemer, and encourage himself in the Lord his God, and cast the anchor of his hope within the veil. Now tell me which of the two will triumph in the storm. Ah! I see the strong one bow. Ye, that hate the Lord, let me assure you, your champion is foiled in the contest. "Even the youths shall faint."

5. I have thought of several other occasions where the ungodly man and the man of faith will have opportunity to test their prowess in the same conflict, but I will add only one. They must both pass the review of the last Judgment. "We must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ." And to set any value upon a spirit of enterprise or of daring, that will not carry us through that last scene, is to play the fool. I wish to cultivate the principles that will carry me through.

Now follow, if you please, one of the most daring of the unbelievers to the last tribunal. How will he manage there? Can he hide his sins? Can he palliate them, or neutralize them? Can he prove that the law was too severe, or the penalty unjust? Can he offer any eloquent plea why he should be acquitted? Will any angel plead for him? Will the blessed Redeemer be his advocate? Will his courage live and thrive in that conflict? If weighed in the balance, will he not be found wanting? If convicted, will not sentence go forth against him? Will devils be afraid to convey him to the place of torment? Suppose him, if you please, to have weathered every other storm, how will he conflict with "everlasting burnings?" By what daring arguments will he keep hope alive in hell, and resist the

embrace of despair, or put out the "unquenchable fires?" Come, ye that intend to brave it through without grace, that dare to live, and expect to die, without an interest in the Lord Jesus, approach the precincts of the pit, and inquire how your champion fares in this last conflict! Does he stand or fall? Does his courage abide by him? May you venture, or not, to join your destiny with his? Let this point be settled before you venture into your dying chamber without the grace of God.

And how does it fare with the *man of faith* in the same conflict? He ventures not to come to the judgment-seat alone, supported by any courage which his depraved heart can generate. He comes clothed with a Saviour's righteousness, owns his guilt, and pleads the atoning blood of the Redeemer. When bid, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;" his reply is, "When saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?" Then will be heard from the throne of judgment, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." You recollect the amazing result. They who come to that throne in their own name, and hope to stand by their own native prowess, "*shall go away into everlasting punishment, prepared for the devil and his angels.*"

Let me say then, fellow-sinner, while you resolve to trust in man, or in anything short of an omnipotent Saviour, there remains for you "no hope," but "a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation." If it seem to you, however, that your cause will succeed, you have only to make the trial. Storms will beat upon you: but if you still think your own heart can generate all the prowess you shall need in the conflicts of life, and death, and judgment, then you must try. It is my duty, however, to assure you, that "even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall."

But, on the other hand, there is "strong consolation to you who *trust in the Lord.*" The promise is, that "you shall mount up on wings as eagles, shall run and not be weary, and walk and not faint." Now God will do all that he has said; will succour you as he has promised, will enlighten your darkness, will provide you a retreat in temptation, will cover your head in the day of battle, will give his angels charge concerning you, and in their hands they shall bear you up, till you have trodden the whole desert through, and passed over Jordan, and entered the New-Jerusalem, to go no more out for ever.

While, then, "*the wicked perish at the presence of God,*"—while it becomes them to "*weep and howl for their miseries that shall come upon them,*"—"let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God; yea, let them exceedingly rejoice."